

to improve instruction, which ultimately has led to increased student achievement. The staff leads by example by being life-long learners themselves! They take advantage of multiple professional development opportunities including active engagement strategies, differentiated instruction, Positive Behavior Supports and Response to Intervention—where Columbia is exemplary at both RTI and PBS implementation.

The teachers at Columbia work over the summer for credit to learn curriculum and create materials for students. They offer numerous after-school activities for students that range from yoga to math club. The staff and teachers' commitment inspires a strong work ethic and exemplary attitude. Students at Columbia are respectful, responsible, safe and kind. As a result, discipline problems have dramatically declined in the past four years, and now teachers have more time to teach. The Award's effect on schools and communities is powerful. As one principal recalls, "The National Blue Ribbon begins a process you cannot stop."

Many National Blue Ribbon Schools find they attract business partners, financial assistance and volunteers. If school choice is an option, as it is at Columbia, student applications to National Blue Ribbon Schools increase. National Blue Ribbon School principals and teacher leaders are called on to give presentations at state, regional, and professional meetings about the practices that have made a difference for their students and faculty. District and state educators visit these model schools to learn about promising leadership and instructional strategies.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent such a fine school and want to recognize the accomplishment of Columbia Elementary School, its teachers and staff, and the students who so richly deserve this coveted Blue Ribbon School Award.

INTRODUCING TWO BILLS RELATED TO POST-9/11 EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce two important legislation that would make common-sense reform to Section 3319 of title 38 of the United States pertaining to post-9/11 educational assistance, also known as "Post-9/11 GI Bill." I supported the creation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill because the brave men and women in uniformed services deserve our nation's support in attaining education. I have heard from many constituents who are benefiting from this worthy program. I have also heard from some who say that the law needs to be amended to ensure that the benefits are fully used.

My first bill, Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Enhancement Act, would expand the authority of veterans to transfer post-9/11 educational assistance to dependents within five years of separation from the uniformed services. Currently, members of the uniformed services must transfer their benefits to their

dependent before leaving the services. My bill would give veterans more time to ascertain whether or not life circumstance dictates the need to transfer the educational benefits to their dependents. The goal is to ensure that more people can take advantage of the educational assistance.

My second bill, Increased Age Limit for Post-9/11 Education Assistance Dependents Act, would increase the age limit to use transferred post-9/11 educational assistance from 26 years old to 29 years old. This is again intended to capture more beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, particularly those who are pursuing medical school or other professional degrees where the typical age of entry is higher than other degrees.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support these two measures so that we can better serve our veterans and military families.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN A. WESTMORELAND

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 15, 2013

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 571, I was unavoidably detained in Georgia and could not make it to Washington, DC in time to cast my vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."